

Furthermore, this is the pending business of the Senate at this time because the House voted. It went down to the President. The President vetoed it. It is the standing order of business before this body. So it is most appropriate that we resolve this matter today.

I encourage my colleagues this afternoon to vote to override the President's veto.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

Mr. BRYAN. In my 12 years in the Senate, I have to say this is the most unfocused debate we have had on this issue. We are not here today to debate whether or not nuclear power is good or bad for the Nation. We are not here today to debate whether interim storage is an appropriate response. We are not here to debate whether or not France has no pollution, as some have suggested, because they have nuclear reactors. I must say, parenthetically, I am not aware that France propels its automotive fleet through nuclear power. But perhaps we can discuss that at some other date.

Very simply, what we are here to talk about is a piece of legislation which the President of the United States has courageously vetoed that would alter the health and safety standards for the Nation. That is the issue. Every American—regardless of his or her politics—should be proud of the President's position.

Our colleagues on the other side of the aisle have taunted our colleagues who support the position that my colleague from Nevada and I have been advocating, as well as the distinguished Senators from California and New Mexico today, saying: What are you going to tell your constituents when you return home? The answer that every Member can give, with a straight face, in responding to that question is: Look, I voted to uphold the health and safety standards of the Nation. I was not prepared for any industry, even though I might support nuclear power, to reduce the health and safety standards for millions of people in this country. I will not do it for nuclear power. I will not do it for anything else. I will not be beholden to a special interest. I am voting in the best interests of my constituents and the Nation in upholding public health and safety.

That is the answer. That is the most powerful response that can be given.

May I inquire how much time I have left.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Twelve seconds.

Mr. BRYAN. Twelve seconds.

I yield the remainder of my time.

#### RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the hour of 12:30 p.m. having arrived, the Senate will be in recess until the hour of 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, at 12:33 p.m., the Senate recessed until 2:16 p.m.; whereupon, the Senate reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. INHOFE).

#### NUCLEAR WASTE POLICY AMENDMENTS ACT OF 2000—VETO—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the hour of 2:15 p.m. having arrived, there will now be 30 minutes under the control of the Senators from Nevada, Mr. REID and Mr. BRYAN, and 30 minutes under the control of the Senator from Alaska, Mr. MURKOWSKI.

Who seeks time?

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I yield 6 minutes to my good friend, the Senator from North Carolina.

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, I have been around this place a long time and a lot of things have happened that I can't quite understand, one of them being the veto of this measure by the President of the United States. If you stop and think, you see that it is purely political. For that reason, I hope this Senate will not hesitate to vote to override the veto of S. 1287, the Nuclear Waste Policy Amendments Act of 2000.

The President's decision to veto this vital legislation is just further evidence that the Clinton administration has no energy policy, except the appeasement of the doctrinaire environmentalists.

Because of the President's purely political veto, the United States will continue to have spent fuel assemblies piling up at all nuclear generation facilities throughout the United States—including five facilities in North Carolina.

The taxpayers of my state alone have paid more than \$700 million into the Nuclear Waste Disposal Fund justifiably expecting that the spent fuel assemblies would be transported to Yucca Mountain, Nevada, for permanent storage.

But no, it was not to happen, according to the environmentalists, and therefore according to the President of the United States, who immediately got his pen out and vetoed it.

A portion of the monthly electric bill payments of North Carolinians and other states goes into this fund, but while the Administration plays its political veto game, North Carolina's utility companies have been forced to construct holding pools or dry cask storage facilities to store this used material. This has caused additional expense for the utilities and higher prices for their customers.

Why did Mr. Clinton veto this legislation? Clearly it was to appease the self-proclaimed environmentalists, who so piously proclaim their concern about the air Americans breathe. We are all concerned about that.

Mr. President, it has long been self-evident that these so-called self-proclaimed environmentalists are opposed to nuclear energy production—which is, behind hydro-power, the cleanest source of electricity. Nuclear power generation does not emit greenhouse gasses into the atmosphere.

The question is inevitable. Is it not better for the environment that no fossil fuels are burned?

So while the President plays politics to please the self-proclaimed environmentalists the spent fuel assemblies continue piling up all over the country in spite of the availability of the Yucca Mountain storage site which—according to the experts—poses absolutely no environmental risks for the permanent disposal of the spent fuel assemblies.

A handful of North Carolina anti-nuclear activists are complaining about the on-site storage of this material. If these activists were truly concerned about the environment, they would support this legislation and urge the federal government to complete construction of the national storage site at Yucca Mountain in one of the most remote areas of the United States.

I have at hand a copy of a letter sent to President Clinton by the Executive Director of the Public Staff of the North Carolina Utilities Commission urging the President to sign S. 1287. I ask unanimous consent that this letter be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the letter was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

NORTH CAROLINA PUBLIC STAFF  
UTILITIES COMMISSION, RALEIGH,  
NC,

April 11, 2000.

The President,  
The White House,  
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT: As Executive Director of the Public Staff-North Carolina Utilities Commission, I am keenly aware of the need for an effective federal nuclear waste management program, and I strongly encourage you to sign S. 1287 passed earlier in the year by the Senate and House.

Nuclear energy accounts for nearly half of the electricity produced in North Carolina. Our state's electricity consumers have paid more than \$700 million into the Nuclear Waste Fund. The national repository for nuclear spent fuel, however, is currently not scheduled to open until 2010, twelve years behind the statutory obligation in the Nuclear Waste Policy Act of 1982.

The two nuclear plant operators in North Carolina—as well as those around the country—are being forced to undertake costly, alternative measures to compensate for the delays and shortcomings in the federal program.

The nuclear waste legislation on the table will be a positive step in the right direction and will provide nuclear plant operators and the communities around their facilities some assurance that the Federal Government will fulfill its obligations in this matter. It is not sound public policy to force nuclear plants to continue indefinitely on-site interim storage of their spent fuel. It is a more responsible course to consolidate the spent fuel in a central facility designed for safe, permanent disposal.